

Minutes of Meeting

Friday 7th October 2016, 10am, Care and Learning Meeting Room, Highland Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness

Attendees:

From 10am

Fergus Weir Kirkhill Primary School
Giles Baker Grantown Grammar
Hugh Wright Lundavra Primary
Ann Urquhart Inverness High School
Andrew McKenna Lochaber High School
Liz Green Culloden Academy
Kate Morris Charleston Academy
John Whitfield Golspie High School
Ellen Addison Fortrose Academy
Sheila Lall Gledfield Primary

Apologies:

Samantha Blythe Dingwall Academy
Kate MacDonald IRA
John Greenhowe North Kessock Primary

From 11am

Jim Steven Head of Education, Highland Council
Ros Bell Policy Officer, Highland Council

1. Welcome

Fergus Weir chaired and opened by welcoming everyone to the meeting and thanking the parents on conference planning working group for their work.

2. Confirmation of minutes from 24th June 2016

<p>Agreed correct. Matter arising – to write a briefing on the pros and cons of the ‘named person scheme’ is ongoing</p>	<p>Proposed: Kate Morris, Charleston Seconded: John Whitfield, Golspie</p>
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3. HPCP Conference 2016 planning.

Kate Morris from the conference working group ran through the proposed draft programme. All agreed it was quite a full schedule and to make the following changes.

- Delete 1.45-2.00 slot by Hugh on social enterprise, who will now do a poster instead, that will be flagged up at morning 10.20-10.30 session. Hugh will also join the panel session at 2.25pm.

-Bill Alexander at 10.30 to cover closing attainment gap, ICT update and ? regional educational boards

-Delete 11.00-11.20 and merge with previous session, add in Chair of Head Teacher;s Association as speaker. Is this right??

-refer to parental engagement 'good practise', rather than 'best practices' to accommodate local variation and different needs

-1.35 election of officers session will emphasise importance of electing a HPCP rep on the Education Committee. This has been a long standing campaign and we have now permission for one HPCP rep in an advisory role. This means that the only way to speak is to send in notification of interest in an issue before the committee meeting. Other Councils have two parents with voting rights and Highland will continue to campaign towards having voting rights and a deputy in each voluntary role.

ACTIONS

-Giles to send out a doodle poll to organise a final conference planning meeting.

-Conference working group to finalise conference programme

4. National Parent Forum Scotland meeting update (Fergus Weir)

The group, formed in 2007, is supported and funded by the Scottish Government and 32 Local Authorities are represented. Fergus represents Highland and is collating useful information and a contacts list so that there is a legacy to hand on to the next HPCP representative. The most recent topics for discussion included:

- a. The publication of an online survey for the review of Parental Involvement with local Authority schools
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/MLD8WBC>
- b. The challenges in Highland, in particular teacher recruitment and ICT are faced in other regions too.
- c. A meeting with all 32 local authority parent reps with John Swinney, the new education minister. - <http://www.npfs.org.uk/2016/09/20/john-swinney-a-message-to-parents/>

The National Parent Forum Scotland has parental representation on many national working groups and organisations as can be seen here -
<http://www.npfs.org.uk/national-parent-forum-of-scotland-external-representation/>

5. Strategic Management of Schools Update (Fergus Weir)

The Highland Council's Management of Schools work streams were setup to implement the budget cuts handed down by the Scottish Government. There is parental representation on this group from the Highland Parent Council Partnership. One of the key aims of the work streams are to identify the most effective ways of implementing budget savings and restructuring of the care and learning within Highland. This work centres on topics such as:

- a. Restructuring the Management of Schools e.g. Discussing introducing Business Management plans and Facilities Management models within Academy Areas (3-18 years), that might allow the Council to implement "area" head teachers, reducing the total number of head teachers in Highland.
- b. Virtual Academies that provide online teaching aim to improve educational outcomes, increase curriculum choice and increase the quality of education. Long term there is an aspiration to coordinate school time tables as far as possible to facilitate this.

6. HPCP Communication Policy (Kate MacDonald)

An effective pyramid communication structure underpins the effectiveness of HPCP, with all Parent Council Chairs linked to HPCP via the google groups email system and then all Parent Council chairs encouraged to contact as many of the Parent Forum as possible by whatever method suits them best.

Towards this end, a draft communication policy paper has been written to clarify HPCP communication options and procedures and where things may be going wrong. HPCP is keen to ensure that there is adequate back up for any parents not so confident in using ICT. In particular the policy paper addresses the issues of:

- Google groups not working;
- PC members logging on using gmail;
- Inadequate numbers setting up diversions to personal emails; and
- Using a closed facebook group to complement googlegroups.

The policy paper will be finalised and presented at the conference in November.

ACTION Kate/ Fergus/Giles to finalise Communication Policy paper

Each term, on behalf of HPCP, Fergus writes to Head Teachers to contact PC Chairs advising them to log on to google groups. Giles has offered to provide telephone advice on how to set up a diversion from googlemail to personal accounts. The Council has assured HPCP that they will have a presumption in favour of Parent Councils accessing parental emails on the contact details update sheet issued to parents by schools in August 2017. Meanwhile parent councils should work to incentivise parents to provide email and/or text numbers and to positively engage.

7. Regional Education Boards (Jim Steven).

As part of devolving power to schools, the Scottish Government has proposed setting new Regional Education Boards that will help schools in different council areas to work together. The precise details are not known and there is limited information at this stage. There have been reports that schools may have more control over budgets and as teachers terms and conditions are nationally agreed, it may be argued that the new regional bodies and not the councils should employ teachers but everything is still under discussion.

There is a big consultation process ongoing that ends January 2017. The Head Teachers are all meeting after the October holidays to have their input.

In Highland, there is already a so called 'Northern Alliance' of 7 Councils comprising Highland, Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Moray, Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland. The existing Northern Alliance works together on joint procurement, closing the attainment gap, literacy strategy, management and virtual learning.. The Northern Alliance is a professional and not a political partnership. The Highland Council is hoping that the Northern Alliance will form the basis of the new Regional Education Board in this area and John Swinney is said to be not against this proposal.

The worry for the Council is that two thirds of the Council budget is Care and Learning and that if this goes to a new Regional Education Board, the Council as a Local Authority may cease.

8. Highland Council Attainment gap (Jim Steven)

John Swinney's number one priority and what he will be judged on is Closing the Attainment Gap.

For the Government attainment is assessed on the basis of literacy and numeracy testing starting at the end of P1, on exam results and on positive destinations using the INSIGHT data. The overall aim is to bring the bottom up as well as increasing overall attainment. Budgets for closing the attainment gap are linked directly to SMID ? deprivation/ social mobility index which is measured by free school meal entitlement in both Primary and Secondary. Schools can only spend on specific projects on specific pupils.

For the Council, the goals are broader and include not only improving attainment and closing the attainment gap, but also improving personal skills and reducing the disengagement risk. The Council are also concerned that rural deprivation linked to travel needs and curriculum availability are also disadvantaging pupils in some schools, especially small, remote and rural ones. That is that educational deprivation is also linked to where you live.

With regards to funding, the Government has made £100 million available in Scotland for closing the attainment gap, starting Aug 2017 and raised by a 1% increase in Council Tax. Of this, £4.8 million will come to Highland (based on free school meal entitlement).

At the next HPCP meeting, Jim will provide a summary of the INSIGHT data for Highland.

9. Conference Planning

- Drew Millar is confirmed
- Bill Alexander and Jim Steven are confirmed
- Jim to invite Chair of the Head Teachers Association from Dingwall
- Giles to set up Doodle Poll for final conference planning meeting
- Ros has sent out registration for conference via Fergus letter to Head Teachers
- PCs to be encouraged to send 2 office bearing representatives.

10. 2016/17 Objectives/ work plan for HPCP

- Communication.** HPCP will continue to review and improve its communication to PC Chairs and encourage PCs to contact the wider parent forum.
- Supporting PCs to increase parental engagement** will continue to be central to HPCP, sharing good practise for parental engagement. New approaches to explore include social enterprise models; though these are heavily reliant on having no overheads which a change of school lets could jeopardise.
- Keeping up to date with Education Committee agenda items,** in particular any developments in ICT and the Highland Monitoring Report.

11. ICT Update

Following recent award of ICT contracts, HPCP requested this as an additional agenda item at the start of the meeting.

Jim explained that [WiPro](#) were recently given the new ICT contract from the Council to cover the infrastructure (engineers and printing) and the chromebooks (to be rolled out over two years from August 2017). Capita have been given the contract to run the network and are providing a bandwidth of 20 MB to all Schools in Highland. There was widespread agreement at the meeting that bandwidth should be a minimum of 100MB for the new setup to work for many of the larger schools.

A big part of the cost saving comes from reducing the number of software titles used in schools from 3,500 to just 300, due the use of google apps for education.

12. A.O.C.B.

a. Primary playground access for parents

This issue was raised by Charlston ASG, that some primary schools are excluding parents from the playground for safety reasons. Parents feel that this is not an inclusive approach and is likely to discourage parental engagement with the school.

ACTION [Jim Steven](#) will look into this.

b. HT and DHT recruitment and PC role

This issue was raised by Golspie PC and has been looked into by Jim Steven. It is usual practise for Parent Council members to be invited to the final interview only; for HT it is X3

PC members and DHT it is X2 PC members. The school/ Council can only request attendance and it is not compulsory.

Jim Steven informed the meeting that in fact, based on the Education Act of 2006, it was agreed in 2007 that Parent Council members should also be included in the lead and shortlist phase.

ACTION The QI Area Manager will review the appointment procedures and Council advice will be put on the HPCP website for information and reference.

c. Recruitment

One parent asked why the professional competence levels among HTs are not always there. This was raised as some HTs applying for a new HT post did not have the minimum professional competence levels.

There is a real shortage of maths and ICT teachers and the Council is supporting a programme at UHI for Highland to grow their own teachers.

13. Date for next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled to take place at Glenurquhart Road, Inverness.

<http://doodle.com/poll/actez9yya72u3thw>)